

The Nidānasamyukta and the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā: understanding the Middle Way through comparison and exegesis

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*hetukriyaparamparā ya jāne
tasya na bhotiha astināstibhāvāḥ ||*

For one who understands the succession of causes and effects,
There are in this world no such things as ‘exists’ or ‘does not exist’.¹

The Nidānasamyukta is a small fragment of a large non-Mahāyāna literature once extant in Sanskrit. Some of its recurring themes (*catuṣkoṭi*, dependent arising, wrong views, and emptiness) immediately remind one of Madhyamaka thought; in one of its acceptations, the very word *nidāna* is related to the causal links/limbs in the twelvefold formula of dependent arising.

In this article, I will try to highlight similarities between the Nidānasamyukta and the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, suggesting a relation between the two texts; this may in turn help interpret and contextualize some of Nāgārjuna’s arguments.² In particular, it will be useful in understanding the link between more generalized discussions about dependent arising and the specific concern with rebirth (as represented in the last two chapters of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā). Lastly, I will argue that Candrakīrti is aware of the non-specifically Mahāyāna background of the arguments, and is conscientious in representing it faithfully.

¹ Lalitavistara 25.4cd.

² I am not implying that the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā may be related only to the Nidānasamyukta as a non-Mahāyāna source. Compare for example Mūlamadhyamakakārikā 24.8 with a passage from the Ekottarāgama: *dve satye samupāśrītya buddhānāṃ dharmadeśanā | lokasaṃvṛtisatyam ca satyam ca paramārthataḥ || 24.8 ||; dve satye śaikṣasya bahukare bhavataḥ | saṃvṛtisatyam paramārthasatyam ca ||* Ekottarāgama, page 201 in Tripāṭhi’s edition.

1. 'A Discussion with Kātyāyana', in Sanskrit

In Mūlamadhyamakakārikā 15.7 we find a reference to the Kātyāyanāvavāda:

*kātyāyanāvavāde cāstīti nāstīti cobhayam |
pratiṣiddham bhagavatā bhāvābhāvavibhāvinā ||*

In the Discussion with Kātyāyana, 'exists', 'does not exist', or both,
was negated by the Blessed one, the one who well observes
existence and non-existence.

Kalupahana has justly remarked that scholars have somehow disregarded this reference, and has pointed to a corresponding section of the Pāli Canon.³ His suggestions are indeed welcome, and I will try to expand upon his precious insights. I should specify at the outset, though, that I do not subscribe to his conclusions in their entirety – that Nāgārjuna's work is merely a commentary on the Kaccāyanagottasutta and there is nothing specifically Mahāyāna-oriented in it.⁴

I will attempt to offer a different interpretation, by taking into greater consideration Nāgārjuna's intended opponents. I shall not try to discredit the (to me convincing) association between Nāgārjuna and the Mahāyāna. Kalupahana argues that Nāgārjuna chooses the Kaccāyanagottasutta over the Kāśyapaparivarta for reasons of doctrinal preference: such choice may be better explained, though, by considering his purported opponents (for whom the Ratnakūṭa literature would have had no authority). Moreover, we cannot simply assume that Nāgārjuna

³ However, he was not the first to notice this reference to the Pāli canon. See de La Vallée Poussin's edition, page 269 note 2, and also M. Sprung, M. (tr.), *Lucid Exposition of the Middle Way*, Boulder: Prajñā Press, 1979, page 159, note 1. De La Vallée Poussin offers useful comments and references in this regard. Kalupahana contends that Candrakīrti is bringing Buddhism closer to Vedānta. It will be obvious that I disagree on interpretive grounds; let me add here that the actual popularity of Vedānta at Candrakīrti's own time is far from self-evident or easy to assess, which makes Kalupahana's overall reconstruction slightly less convincing.

⁴ Kalupahana's own position is more nuanced, since he proposes a periodization of his own for the history of Buddhist philosophy, sharply distinguishing between 'earlier' and 'later' Mahāyāna trends. Here too, I disagree on several accounts: for example, in the Vajracchedikā, the discussion about how to give rise (*utpādayitavyam*) to the mind (*citta*) seems very much related to the idea of *cittotpāda* (see Bodhisattvabhūmi II), meaning the arising of *bodhicitta*: it is understood in this way by Kamalaśīla. In order not to excessively burden my arguments, though, I have on occasion glossed over some finer distinctions introduced by Kalupahana. It will also be seen that this article implicitly challenges his periodization of ideas.

would have been familiar with the Kāśyapaparivarta as available to us now.

If we wish to look for non-Mahāyāna sources related to Nāgārjuna's thought, the Pāli Canon may not be the best candidate: the very fact that the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā is written in Sanskrit suggests as much. Moreover, the background for many of the arguments is closer (although not identical) to Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma rather than Theravāda Abhidhamma. It would therefore be more sensible to look into texts within a similar fold.

Candrakīrti does as much, as he quotes from the Kātyāyanānvavādasūtra. Moreover, he ends his quote by noticing that 'this Sūtra is found in all the Nikāyas' (*idaṃ ca sūtraṃ sarvanikāyeṣu paṭhyate*). Interestingly, and against the grain of Kalupahana's overall assessment of his thought, Candrakīrti quotes the Kātyāyanānvavādāna again in the Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya, in order to *prove* that Śrāvakas also do realize emptiness (something that had already been pointed out by de La Vallee Poussin).⁵

Kalupahana's references to Pāli Suttas are surely not out of place, considering how Pāli and Sanskrit non-Mahāyāna sources are usually fairly close; he himself mentions the correspondence between the Kaccāyanagottasutta and its Chinese counterpart (translated from the Sanskrit). However, if a relevant non-Mahāyāna text could be found in Sanskrit, we should give it some attention: this is the extent of my argument in terms of identifying background sources. I am primarily concerned here with how Nāgārjuna's arguments may have been perceived and understood by his prospective audience – who were, after all, recipients of a Sanskrit rather than a Pāli text.⁶ This will surely help us understand the intended context (and content) of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā.

The Sūtra fragment quoted by Candrakīrti resembles not only the Kaccāyanagottasutta, but also another very similar text, ancient, possibly of wide acceptability amongst Nāgārjuna's opponents, and extant in Sanskrit. The Nidānasamyukta contains a Sūtra representing a discussion (*avavāda*) between Kātyāyana and the Buddha (Sūtra 19): it is close to the Pāli Kaccāyanagottasutta mentioned by Kalupahana (Samyuttanikāya XII.15, PTS II.16-17), but, as we will see, it contains

⁵ Page 269, note 5 of his edition of the Prasannapadā: 'Dans le bhāṣya du Madhyamakāvatāra (I.6) le Kātyāyana. est allégué en vue de prouver que la connaissance de la *śūnyatā* est commune aux Ārāvakas et aux Bodhisattvas.'

⁶ As pointed out by Peter Skilling, the context and mode of circulation of polemical texts in Medieval India is far from clear to us, and I believe this affects our perception of the nature and purpose of the texts we are discussing about.

some significant differences. For this reason too, I may have to disagree with Kalupahana's contention:

Nor is there any evidence to support the hypothesis that the "Admonition to Kātyāyana" (Kātyāyanāvavāda) that Nāgārjuna was referring to was a version different from the Kaccāyanagottasutta found in Pali and Chinese.⁷

Unfortunately, as I do not read Chinese, I am not in a position to assess whether the Pāli and Chinese versions are identical, as Kalupahana implies.⁸ However, the Kaccāyanagottasutta (or Kaccānagottasutta) differs from the version in the Nidānasamyukta, and incidentally, it also differs from the Kātyāyanāvavādasūtra fragment as quoted in Candrakīrti's commentary. This means, that *there is* evidence to support the hypothesis that Nāgārjuna was referring to a different version – the one I am going to analyse being one such candidate. The existence of a different version, closer to the Mūlamadhyamakārikā, is itself the evidence.

Nidānasamyukta 19 presents precisely what Nāgārjuna describes as the content of the Kātyāyanāvavāda: the Buddha explains that both *asti* and *nāsti* are extremes (*anta*) and that they are not the Middle Path. The initial passage of Candrakīrti's quotation appears to be related, but not identical, to this text. We may compare the two:

Prasannapadā on 15.7:

yad bhūyasā kātyāyana ayaṃ loko 'stitāṃ vā abhiniviṣṭaḥ nāstitāṃ ca [...]

For the most, Kātyāyana, this world is attached to existence and non-existence [...].

Nidānasamyukta 19:

dvayaṃ niśrīto 'yaṃ kātyāyana loko yad bhūyasāstitāṃ ca niśrīto nāstitāṃ ca [...]

This world, Kātyāyana, clings to two things: for the most, it clings to existence and to non-existence [...].

⁷ Kalupahana, *ibidem*, page 7.

⁸ Choong's translation, however, suggests that the Chinese version may be closer to the Sanskrit than to the Pāli version. See M. Choong, *Annotated Translation of Sūtras from the Chinese Saṃyuktāgama relevant to the Early Buddhist Teachings on Emptiness and the Middle Way*, Johor Bahru: Persatuan Penganut Agama Buddha, 2004, pp. 39-43.

The following sections do not correspond; however, the initial sentences appear to be quite close.

Nāgārjuna's argument in the following verses refutes *asti* and *nāsti* in terms of a wrong view of permanence (*śāśvata*) and a view of discontinuity (*uccheda*) respectively, explaining their incompatibility with the commonly perceived fact of change (*anyathātvam*). See in particular the last verse, 11:

asti yadd hi svabhāvena na tan nāstīti śāśvatam |
nāstīdānīm abhūt pūrvam ity ucchedaḥ prasajyate ||

What exists with *svabhāva*, does not not exist: this is permanence;
It does not exist now, [although] it was before: thus, discontinuity
is entailed.

And compare it with the last section of Nidānasamyukta 19:

tat kasmādd hetoḥ | lokasamudayaṃ kātyāyana yathābhūtaṃ
samyakprajñayā paśyato yā loke nāstītā sā na bhavati |
lokanirodhaṃ yathābhūtaṃ samyakprajñayā paśyato yā loke
'stītā sā na bhavati |

And why is that? Someone, Kātyāyana, who sees through perfect knowledge the arising of the world as it is, does not conceive of non-existence in respect to the world. Someone, Kātyāyana, who sees through perfect knowledge the cessation of the world as it is, does not conceive of existence in respect to the world.

It does seem like verses 8-11 may be commenting upon this part of the Sūtra: however, the contention that '[...] the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā [...] is a grand commentary to the Buddha's own Kaccāyanagotta-sutta [...] is perhaps an exaggerated conclusion.⁹

I have anticipated that the Pāli version of the same Sutta contains some significant differences: in fact, it qualifies the basic statements of the Buddha, adding something to be found neither in the Nidānasamyutka version, nor in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā – the word 'everything' (*sabbam*):

sabbam atthīti kho kaccāyana eko anto | sabbam nātthīti ayaṃ
dutiyo anto ||

⁹ David J. Kalupahana, *Nāgārjuna: The Philosophy of the Middle Way: the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā of Nāgārjuna*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1986, page 5. Perhaps this was meant as a conscious hyperbole?

Everything exists', Kaccāyana, is indeed one extreme; 'everything does not exist', this is the second extreme.

To say that *asti* and *nāsti* are extremes and bases for attachment can be read as meaning that they may be mere conceptual additions; an important theme throughout Madhyamaka literature, perhaps best exemplified in the 9th chapter of the Bodhicaryāvatāra. On the other hand, to say that *sabbam atthi* and *sabbam nātthi* are extremes can be interpreted as a much milder claim, meaning that some things do indeed exist (but not all do) while other things (but not all) do not exist.

Kalupahana's 'milder' interpretation of Nāgārjuna, according to which he is not refuting the ultimate *dharma*s, rests heavily on this qualified claim as found in the Pāli Kaccāyanagottasutta.¹⁰ However, the additional word *sabbam* has no corresponding expression in the Sanskrit Sūtra, and brings the Pāli version further away from the wording of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā (which does not contain them either). It is indeed a feature of the entire Mūlamadhyamakakārikā to state negations without qualifiers. The existence of a Sanskrit Sūtra, closer to Nāgārjuna's own text and allowing for a stronger interpretation of the 'extremes', weakens the force of Kalupahana's arguments – allowing us to read the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā more in line with Madhyamaka commentarial literature. Hence, apart from the more obvious argument based on Nāgārjuna's language of choice (Sanskrit), we must add this additional consideration that regards coherence of exegesis.

Incidentally, the analogous passage from the Kāśyapaparivarta does not have an equivalent to the additional qualifier *sabbam* of the Pāli:

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pages 10–20. I am purposely avoiding any consideration of relative chronology. In this case, one could argue that the simpler and shorter Sanskrit version may be older than the Pāli, and this may be thought to help my argument. However, I would not subscribe to such line of argumentation. I find that such reasoning in favour of textual anteriority is weak and inconclusive. Secondly, even if we were to accept such rationale, there is no assurance that Nāgārjuna and his audience would have necessarily favoured the older version.

I find an additional difficulty with Kalupahana's exegesis, due to the way he reads the Kaccāyanagottasutta: at least, I understand him to take it as a statement about the arising and passing away of *dhammas*. Kalupahana seems to consider this a 'given' of experience, but I suspect such a position may carry metaphysical implications (what about the idea of an experiential 'given'?). Most importantly, I do not see, in the Sutta itself, any textual support for Kalupahana's claims. If I may put it this way, Kalupahana's suggestion that we should free ourselves from the commentaries somehow masks the fact that he is also, after all, commenting and interpreting the Sutta. In other words, the choice is not between a commentary and a faithful representation, but between two commentaries, both claiming to be faithful.

*astīti kāśyapa ayam eko'ntaḥ nāstīty ayam dvitīyo'ntaḥ yad etayor
dvayor antayor maddhyam iyam ucyate kāśyapa madhyamā
pratipad dharmāṇāṃ bhūtapratyavekṣā ||*¹¹

‘Exists’, Kāśyapa: this is one extreme; ‘doesn’t exist’: this is the second extreme. The middle between these two extremes, this is called, Kāśyapa, the Middle Way; the genuine observation of the *dharma*s.

This sentence is very close to the short passage found in the Pāli Kaccānagottasutta as quoted above, a sentence which, in turn, is not at all found in Nidānasamyukta 19. To summarize, the situation is as follows: the Nidānasamyukta contains no statement about *asti* and *nāsti* being the two extremes (*anta*); such a statement is found in the Kāśyapaparivarta without further qualifications; the Pāli version makes a similar statement, *with the additional qualifier sabbam*.

More is to be gained by looking at the Nidānasamyukta as a whole.¹²

2. The equivalence of emptiness and dependent arising in the Nidānasamyukta and in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā

In verse 24.8 of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, Nāgārjuna famously declares the equivalence between dependent arising and emptiness:

*yah pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatām tām pracakṣmahe |
sā prajñaptir upādāya pratipad saiva madhyamā ||*

Whatever is dependent arising is what we call ‘emptiness’;
that is dependent designation, and that itself is the Middle Path.

Among the twenty-five Sūtras of the Nidānasamyukta edited by Tripāṭhī, one has ‘Mahāśūnyatā’ as its theme. Under the heading of ‘the Teaching of Great Emptiness’ (*mahāśūnyatānāmadharmaparyāya*)

¹¹ See pages 25-26 of Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya’s edition. I prefer this reading to Stael-Holstein *bhūtapratyavekṣāt*, since I agree that here the *t* is a superfluous *akṣara*.

¹² Most of the Sūtras of the Nidānasamyukta, treating of dependent arising and its various limbs, are thematically related to chapter 26 of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā - out of twenty-five Sūtras, this is true of the following: 1,2,3,4,5,6,10,11,14,15,16,17,19, 20,21,22,23. Additional similarities in content can be seen between the following: NS (Nidānasamyukta) 6, MMK (Mūlamadhyamakakārikā) 12; NS 8, MMK 10; NS 12, MMK 6; NS 13, MMK 3; NS 14, MMK 27; NS 15, MMK 27; NS 18, MMK 17 (especially verse 18); NS 19, MMK 15; NS 20, MMK 12; NS 21, MMK 12; NS 22, MMK 12. The most extensive and (to my mind) significant similarities are analysed in this article.

it presents nothing more than the twelve links of dependent arising, within the context of the arising of suffering (*samudaya*), the path to overcome it (*mārga*), and the final cessation of suffering (*nirodha*). In other words, it teaches dependent arising in the context of the Four Noble Truths, and it teaches dependent arising as the teaching of ‘Great Emptiness’: the same equivalence brought forth by Nāgārjuna, and in fact, within a similar context.

To understand that the context is similar, consider that Nāgārjuna in this chapter is responding to an initial objection that:

yadi śūnyam idaṃ sarvaṃ udayo nāsti na vyayaḥ |
catūrṇāṃ āryasatyānāṃ abhāvas te prasajyate || 24.1 ||

If all of this is empty, there is no arising and no passing away;
The non-existence of the Four Truths of the Noble follows for you.

Verse 20 turns the objection against the opponent:

yady aśūnyam idaṃ sarvaṃ udayo nāsti na vyayaḥ |
catūrṇāṃ āryasatyānāṃ abhāvas te prasajyate || 24.20 ||

If all of this is non-empty, there is no arising and no passing away;
The non-existence of the Four Truths of the Noble follows for you.

Just as in the *Mahāśūnyatādharmaparyāya*, emptiness is seen within the context of dependent arising (*udaya* and *vyaya*) and the establishment of the Four Noble Truths.

A link between this Sūtra and the teachings of emptiness (in the Madhyamaka sense of *dharmanairātmya* as well) is found in a text ascribed (by tradition) to none other than Nāgārjuna himself: the *Mahā-prajñāpāramitopadeśaśāstra, preserved in Chinese. Lamotte brought to our notice that this text considers the Mahāśūnyatāsūtra as one of ‘those Sūtras of the Tripiṭaka that formally teach about *dharmaśūnyatā*.’¹³ More recently, an important article by Peter Skilling has pointed out many of the links which I am here discussing.¹⁴

¹³ Etienne Lamotte, ‘Trois Sūtra du “Saṃyukta” sur la vacuité’, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 36, No. 2, In Honour of Walter Simon (1973), page 319: ‘[...] l’Upadeśa (ch. 31, p. 295 b 27-8) range le Mahāśūnyatāsūtra du Saṃyuktāgama parmi les quelques Sūtra du Tripiṭaka enseignant formellement la *dharmaśūnyatā*.’

¹⁴ Peter Skilling, ‘Mrgāra’s Mother’s Mansion: Emptiness and the Śūnyatāsūtras’, in *Journal of Indian and Tibetan Studies*, 11 (2007): pp. 225-247. Consider in particular the following section, most pertinent to the present study: ‘What is the relation between dependent arising and emptiness? The two are not explicitly identified in the Pāli canon, and it may

In the same article, Lamotte has reconstructed from the Chinese two more Sūtras of the Samyuktāgama that deal with emptiness. Again, the thematic recurrence of emptiness within the Samyuktāgama should be taken into account when reading the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā.

3. The analysis of suffering: Chapter 12 of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā compared to Nidānasamyukta 20

A few texts from the Nidānasamyukta employ the well-known argumentative structure of the *catuskoṭi*. In particular, Sūtra 20 takes up the analysis of suffering, denying four possible alternatives in respect to its production and thus applying the tetralemma in a way analogous (although perhaps not identical), both in content and terminology, to Mūlamadhyamakakārikā Chapter 12. The Sūtra, together with Sūtra 22, also helps understanding verse 21 of the Lokātitastava, as we shall see. Once again Kalupahana helpfully identifies the relevant sources in Pāli and in Chinese.

In Sūtra 20, Acelakāśyapa asks the Buddha about the nature of suffering, according to four alternatives: is it self-produced (*svayaṃkṛtam*), produced from something else (*parakṛtam*), is it both self-produced and produced from something else (*svayaṃkṛtāṇ ca parakṛtāṇ ca*), or is it arisen without a cause—be it self-production or other-production (*asvayaṃkārāparakārāhetusamutpannā*)? To all four alternatives, the Buddha states that he gives no answer (*avyākṛtam*). Nonetheless, the Buddha does not deny suffering altogether but, avoiding two extremes, he teaches the *dharma*, which in turn means dependent arising. Here follows the central, relevant section from that Sūtra:

have been the Sarvāstivādins who first took the step, or at least codified or canonized the concept, which is, after all, a natural outcome of the concepts of non-self and dependent arising, which are already linked in such texts as the *Bimbisārapratyudgamana-mahāsūtra* and its many parallels. This identification becomes explicit in the *Mahāśūnyatā-nāma-dharmaparyāya* (above, colophon to §V) and the *Paramārthaśūnyatā-sūtra*, two short sūtras unique to the Sarvāstivāda transmission. The idea is taken up in Bodhisattva sūtras, for example the *Kāśyapa-parivarta*, which describes a particular interpretation of *pratīyasamutpāda*, in which each *aṅga* and its cessation is understood to be non-dual, as ‘the middle path, the true understanding of phenomena’ (*madhyamā pratipad dharmāṇāṃ bhūtapratyavekṣā*). The identification of the middle path with dependent arising is, of course, canonical, as for example in the *Kātyāyana-sūtra* and other sūtras in the Nidānasamyukta.’ (Page 238).

Louis Gomez had also drawn parallels between certain sections of the Pāli Suttanipāta and Madhyamaka thought. However, the features of Madhyamaka philosophy that he dealt with and emphasized are quite different from the focus of the present article. See: Louis O. Gomez, ‘Proto-Madhyamika in the Pali Canon’ in *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 26, No. 2, Apr. 1976: 137-165.

[...] kin nu bho gautama **svayaṃkṛtaṃ duḥkham** | avyākṛtaṃ idam mayā kāśyapa svayaṃkṛtaṃ duḥkham | kin nu bho gautama **parakṛtaṃ duḥkham** | etad api kāśyapa avyākṛtaṃ mayā parakṛtaṃ duḥkham | kin nu bho gautama **svayaṃkṛtaṃ ca parakṛtaṃ ca duḥkham** | etad api kāśyapa avyākṛtaṃ mayā svayaṃ kṛtaṃ ca parakṛtaṃ ca duḥkham | kin nu bho gautama **asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannaṃ duḥkham** | etad api kāśyapa avyākṛtaṃ mayā asvayaṃkāra-parakārahetusamutpannaṃ duḥkham | kin nu bho gautama svayaṃ kṛtaṃ duḥkham iti prṣṭo ‘vyākṛtaṃ iti vadasi parakṛtaṃ svayaṃ kṛtaṃ ca parakṛtaṃ ca asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannaṃ duḥkham iti prṣṭo ‘vyākṛtaṃ iti vadasi | kin nu bho gautama nāsty eva duḥkham | na kāśyapa nāsty eva duḥkham iti tv asty eva duḥkham | sādhu me bhavān gautamas tathā dharmaṃ deśayatu yathāhaṃ duḥkhaṃ jāneyaṃ duḥkhaṃ paśyeyam | sā eva kāśyapa vedanā sa vetṭīti yasyaivaṃ syāt svayaṃ kṛtaṃ duḥkham evaṃ ahaṃ na vadāmi | anyā vedanā anyo vetṭīti yasyaivaṃ syāt parakṛtaṃ duḥkham evaṃ ahaṃ na vadāmi | vedanābhībhūtasyaivāsataḥ pare duḥkhaṃ samavadadhatīti yasyaivaṃ syāt svayaṃ kṛtaṃ ca parakṛtaṃ ca duḥkham evaṃ apy ahaṃ na vadāmi | satsu ca pratyayeṣu duḥkhāni santīti yasyaivaṃ syād asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannaṃ duḥkham evaṃ ahaṃ na vadāmi | ity etāv ubhāv antāv anupagamya madhyamayā pratipadā tathāgato dharmaṃ deśayati | yad utāsmiṃ satīdaṃ bhavaty asyotpādād idam utpadyate pūrvavad yāvat samudayo nirodhaś ca bhavati | [...]

Gautama, is suffering self-produced? By me this is not declared, Kāśyapa - that suffering is self-produced. Gautama, is suffering produced from something else? By me this also is not declared, Kāśyapa – that suffering is produced from something else. Gautama, is suffering both self-produced and produced from something else? By me this also is not declared, Kāśyapa – that suffering is both self-produced and produced from something else. Gautama, is suffering arisen without a cause, be it self-production or production from something else? By me this also is not declared, Kāśyapa – suffering arisen without a cause, be it self-production or production from something else.

How is it, Gautama, that when you are asked ‘is suffering self-produced’ you say ‘I don’t explain in that way’? When asked ‘is suffering produced from something else, is it both self-produced and produced from something else, is it arisen without a cause, be it self-production or production from something else’ you say

‘I don’t explain in that way’? Is it that, Gautama, suffering doesn’t even exist? It is not, Kāśyapa, that suffering doesn’t even exist: suffering indeed exists. Respected Gautama, it is good, may the Dharma be taught to me in such a way that I may know suffering, I may see suffering.

Feeling and the one who feels are the same: as for one who thinks in this way that suffering is self-produced – I don’t say it to be so. Feeling is something else from the one who feels: as for one who thinks in this way that suffering is produced from something else – I don’t say it to be so.

The suffering of someone who is not even overcome by feeling descends upon another: as for one who thinks in this way that suffering is both self-produced and produced from something else – I don’t say it to be so either. When the conditions are there, different types of suffering are there: as for one who thinks in this way that suffering arises without a cause, be it self-production or production from something else – I don’t say it to be so. Not approaching either of these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dharma according to the Middle Way. That is: this being there, that exists; from the arising of this, that arises; as before, up to ‘arising and cessation occurs’ [...]

Compare this with Mūlamadhyamakakārikā 12:

svayaṃ kṛtaṃ parakṛtaṃ dvābhyāṃ kṛtaṃ ahetukaṃ |
duḥkhaṃ ity eka icchanti tacca kāryaṃ na yujyate || 12.1 ||

svayaṃ kṛtaṃ yadi bhavet pratītya na tato bhavet |
skandhān imān amī skandhāḥ saṃ bhavanti pratītya hi || 12.2 ||

yady amībhya ime ‘nye syur ebhya vāmī pare yadi |
bhavet parakṛtaṃ duḥkhaṃ parair ebhir amī kṛtāḥ || 12.3 ||

svapudgalakṛtaṃ duḥkhaṃ yadi duḥkhaṃ punar vinā |
svapudgalaḥ sa katamo yena duḥkhaṃ svayaṃ kṛtaṃ || 12.4 ||

parapudgalajaṃ duḥkhaṃ yadi yasmai pradīyate |
pareṇa kṛtvā tad duḥkhaṃ sa duḥkhena vinā kutaḥ || 12.5 ||

parapudgalajaṃ duḥkhaṃ yadi kaḥ parapudgalaḥ |
vinā duḥkhena yaḥ kṛtvā parasmai prahiṇoti tat || 12.6 ||

*svayaṁ kṛtasyāprasiddher duḥkhaṁ parakṛtaṁ kutaḥ |
paro hi duḥkhaṁ yat kuryāt tat tasya syāt svayaṁ kṛtaṁ || 12.7 ||*

*na tāvat svakṛtaṁ duḥkhaṁ na hi tenaiva tat kṛtaṁ |
paro nātmakṛtaś cet syād duḥkhaṁ parakṛtaṁ katham || 12.8 ||*

*syād ubhābhyāṁ kṛtaṁ duḥkhaṁ syād ekaikakṛtaṁ yadi |
parākārāsvayaṁ kāraṁ duḥkham ahetukaṁ kutaḥ || 12.9 ||*

*na kevalaṁ hi duḥkhasya cāturvidhyaṁ na vidyate |
bāhyānām api bhāvānām cāturvidhyaṁ na vidyate || 12.10 ||*

12.1. Self-produced, produced from something else, from both, or produced from no cause; some wish suffering to be so, but that does make sense as an effect.

12.2. If it were self-produced, it would then not have come about in dependence upon something.

Indeed, these aggregates come about in dependence upon those aggregates.

12.3. If these were other from those, or those were other from these, suffering would be produced from something else: these would be produced from those others.

12.4. If suffering is produced by one's own person, who is its person, apart from suffering, by whom suffering is produced?

12.5. If suffering is born from some other person, the one to whom that suffering is given after having being produced by someone else, where is he apart from suffering?

12.6. If suffering is born from some other person, who is the other person, apart from suffering, who gives suffering to someone else after having produced it?

12.7. When what is self-produced is not established, how could suffering be produced from something else?

Because, the other one who would produce suffering, for him, that suffering would be self-produced.

12.8. Then, suffering is not self-produced, because it is not produced by he himself.

If the other is not self-produced, how could suffering be produced by something else?

12.9. Suffering could be produced from both, if it could be produced from each taken severally.

How could there be suffering neither from other-production nor from self-production, without a cause?

12.10. It is not only for suffering that these four modes are not found; for external things also these four modes are not found.

Verse 12.9 contains the expression *parākārāsvayaṃkāraṇi* which seems as close as one could get (within *anuṣṭubh* metre) to *asvayaṃkāraparakāra*: the latter compound appears 17 times in the Nidānasamyukta, in the same context as in Nāgārjuna's text, refuting the fourth alternative in the *catuṣkoṭi*.¹⁵

On the other hand, it is not found even once in the Śālistambasūtra or the *Madhyamakaśālistambasūtra, two Mahāyāna texts closely related to Madhyamaka. They contain the negation of 'produced from oneself' (*svayaṃkrta*) and 'produced from another' (*parakṛta*), but always resort to *nobhayakṛta* when denying the third *koṭi*.¹⁶ Even these alternative expressions appear with far less frequency than we find them in the Nidānasamyukta.

Comparing the text of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā with the Sūtra helps us to understand Candrakīrti's glosses for the terms *duḥkha* and

¹⁵ *asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannaṃ jarāmaraṇaṃ* (Nidānasamyukta 6.7, twice);
asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannaṃ nāmarūpaṃ (6.9, twice);
asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannaṃ vijñānaṃ (6.10, twice);
asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannaṃ nāmarūpaṃ (6.11);
asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannaṃ duḥkhaṃ (20.9, twice);
asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannaṃ duḥkhaṃ (20.10);
asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannaṃ duḥkhaṃ (20.13);
asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannaṃ sukhaduḥkhaṃ (22.6, twice);
asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannaṃ sukhaduḥkhaṃ (22.7);
asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannaṃ sukhaduḥkhaṃ (22.15);
asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannaṃ sukhaduḥkhaṃ (22.16b);
asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannaṃ sukhaduḥkhaṃ (22.23).

¹⁶ *sa cāyam aṅkuro na svayaṃkrto [na parakṛto] nobhayakṛto neśvaranirmito [...]* Śālistambasūtra, 14 (see Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā page 578); *sa cā nāmarūpāṅkuro na svayaṃkrto na parakṛto nobhayakṛto neśvaranirmito [...]* Śālistambasūtra, 34 (Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā page 481). Practically the same expressions appear in what VV Gokhale called the *Madhyamakaśālistambasūtra, and there also, only twice. I must thank Peter Skilling for pointing out that the short text is in fact 'a śāstra of unknown origin, authorship, or title.'

bahyānām api bhāvānam (verse 10). In his introductory commentary to verse 1, Candrakīrti specifies that ‘suffering’ refers to the ‘five aggregates of clinging’ (*pañcopādānaskandhā duḥkham ity ucyate*); introducing verse 10, he states that ‘external things too’ refers to such things as ‘seeds, sprouts, pots and clothe textiles, etc.’ (*bījāṅkuraghaṭapaṭādayaḥ*). This is in line with the idea of understanding the arising of suffering as the internal (*ādhyātmika*) dependent arising, the equation put forth by Sūtra 20. On the other hand, seed and sprout are the initial limbs of what is elsewhere (in the Śālistambasūtra) termed ‘external’ (*bāhya*) dependent arising. Please consider how this too corroborates my overall claim that Mādhyamikas, just like other Buddhist philosophers, discuss dependent arising *primarily* within the context of the twelve limbs and hence, rebirth. However, we can also notice that the very last verse brings Nāgārjuna’s arguments closer to the Śālistambasūtra, since he extends the argument to the *bāhyapratītyasamutpāda* – usually (as far as I know) not directly discussed in the Pāli Suttas or in the Nidānasamyukta. In this particular instance, we can find an important feature, which shows Nāgārjuna’s treatment to be one step removed from his non-Mahāyāna sources and one step closer to the discussion of dependent arising in the Śālistambasūtra. This lends some additional credit to Candrakīrti’s identification of the Śālistambasūtra as a primary exegetical source for the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā.¹⁷

I have highlighted (in bold) the terminological similarities between the two texts. We can further detect several analogies in the arguments employed: in both cases, they rest upon an analysis of the agent of experience (*yo vetti* in the Sūtra, and the *pudgala* in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā); moreover, both texts refer to the dependent arising of the aggregates (verse 12.2 and the final section of the Sūtra, respectively).

The Pāli version differs from the Sanskrit in several respects (even, in part, in the narrative). Two differences are here to be noted; the Buddha’s answers do not contain the expression *avyākṛtaṃ (mā hevaṃ kassapāti bhagavā avoca* as opposed to *avyākṛtaṃ mayā kāśyapa [...]*); and secondly, they further qualify the last *koṭi* with the expression ‘at random’ (*adhiṃccam*), where the Nidānasamyukta has ‘cause’ (*hetu*):

¹⁷ The Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam accepts that *pratītyasamutpāda* can either pertain to sentient beings (*sattvākyah*) or two things that are not sentient beings (*asattvākyah*). Vasubandhu however mentions that ‘in the Sūtra we find only the one pertaining to sentient beings’ (*sūtre sattvākyah eva*) and sets to explain why, in Abhidharmakośabhāṣya 3.25cd and commentary (which will be discussed later in this article). This suggests that Vasubandhu, in the context of the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, did not consider the Śālistambasūtra as authoritative for his audience, something to take into account when we wish to assess the currency that this Sūtra may have had a few centuries earlier, amongst Nāgārjuna’s opponents.

Samyuttanikāya:

*kinpanabhogotamaasayaṃkāraṃaparāṃkāraṃadhiccaṃsamuppannam
dukkhanti* |

Gautama, is it that suffering is not self-produced, not produced from something else, arisen fortuitously?

Nidānasamyukta:

*kin nu bho gautama asvayaṃkāraparakārahetusamutpannam
dukkham*¹⁸

Gautama, is it that suffering is arisen from neither self-production nor production from something else as a cause?

We can see how the wording of the Nidānasamyukta is closer to Nāgārjuna's own (which does not include *yadṛccha*):

*syād ubhābhyāṃ kṛtaṃ duḥkhaṃ syād ekaikakṛtaṃ yadi |
parākārāsvayaṃkāraṃ duḥkham ahetukaṃ kutaḥ || 12.9 ||*

12.9. If suffering were produced from both, it would be produced from each taken severally.

How could there be suffering neither from other-production nor from self-production, without a cause?

The next two Sūtras (21 and 22) of the Nidānasamyukta are also closely related to the same topic; however, they substitute *sukhaduḥkha* for *duḥkha*. Sūtra 22 adds two important elements: i.) the questions about the nature of *sukhaduḥkha* are asked by non-Buddhist 'wanderers' (*anyatīrthikaparivrājakāḥ*); ii.) after denying that *sukhaduḥkha* corresponds to any of the four alternatives, the Buddha tells Ānanda that it is dependently arisen (*pratītyasamutpannam*). The second point was indeed implied even in Sūtra 20, however, here it is explicitly stated. Compare this with Lokātīstava 21:

*svayaṃ kṛtaṃ parakṛtaṃ dvābhyāṃ kṛtaṃ ahetukaṃ |
tārkikair iṣyate duḥkhaṃ tvayā tūktaṃ pratītyajam ||*

Self-produced, produced from something else, from both,
produced from without a cause,

¹⁸ Leon Feer, the editor of the Pali Text Society, records an alternative reading, wherein *kāra* is dropped in case of the fourth *koṭi*. This would bring the text even further away from Nāgārjuna's verse.

Suffering is thus interpreted by the speculators, but it was explained by you to be born dependently.

Although we may wish to generalize the sense of *tārkikaiḥ* for philosophical reasons, anyone familiar with the narrative presented in Nidānasamyukta 22 would have recalled that narrative, since that source presents the same exact elements: others expect one of the four alternatives, the Buddha denies them and, lastly, he affirms dependent arising.

Incidentally, this is also akin to the overall structure of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā; others hold on to one thing or the other, Nāgārjuna refutes them all, and lastly (chapter 26), he affirms the workings of the twelve limbs of *pratītyasamutpāda*.

4. Dependent arising and wrong views: A comparison between Sūtra 14 and the last two Chapters of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā

Between Chapter 26 and Chapter 27 of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā we find a progression from the twelve links of dependent arising to the elimination of wrong views; this may puzzle some readers, since it differs from the rationale employed in all the other chapters to shift from one subject matter to the next. In most instances, Candrakīrti explains the transition from one topic to the next through the logic of contextually relevant objections and rebuttals.¹⁹ However, in this instance he suggests that the shift of topic is derived from *continuity of exegesis*, i.e. he quotes a source wherein dependent arising and the relinquishing of views are expressly linked:

yaś caivaṃ pratītyasamutpādaṃ yathābhūtaṃ paśyati sa na pūrvāntaṃ pratisarati nāparāntaṃ pratisaratītyadi sūtre paṭhyate, tatra katamaḥ pūrvāntaḥ katamo'parāntaḥ kathaṃ na pratisaratīti tad vyutpattiyartham ārabhate |

¹⁹ Chapters 2 to 12 all begin with *atrāha*, introducing an objection; Chapter 13 introduces *atrāha* shortly after Verse 1; Chapters 14 to 25 again all begin with *atrāha*. Even Chapter 26 begins with *atrāha*, but in this case, rather than an objection, it introduces a question about dependent arising. Chapter 27 introduces once again a question, this time not even using *atrāha*. There is good justification, I think, for saying that the transition from 25 to 26 and the transition from 26 to 27 are interpreted differently from all the preceding instances. This may suggest a progression of sorts: that at this point the hypothetical opponent has been 'convinced' by the argument in favour of emptiness and now wishes to know more about its nature. Since this was earlier identified as dependent arising, now (beginning of 26) Candrakīrti tells us that the opponent is asking about dependent arising.

‘One who in this way sees dependent arising as it is, does not run after the prior limit, does not run after the ulterior limit’ etc. – this is found in the Sūtra. In that respect, what is the prior limit, what is the ulterior limit, how does one not run after them? Thus, he begins in order to explain that.

The important expression here is ‘he begins in order to explain that’ (*tad vyutpattiyartham ārabhate*), which implies that the following section of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā is, in fact, taken to be a commentary. Candrakīrti is stating that since the topical progression in the Sūtra source is from the twelve limbs to the elimination of views, Nāgārjuna is following the same steps. I would side with Candrakīrti (perhaps vs. Kalupahana) in identifying a source other than the Kaccāyanagotta/Kātyānāvavāda as the background for Chapter 27.

Candrakīrti explains that *pūrvānta* means past identities, past lives (*atītātmanabhāva*). Please note: the ‘views’ to be eliminated are, after all, *wrong views about rebirth*. The very fact that Candrakīrti may have explained this concluding section in this vein should be a good index of the intended topical emphasis in Madhyamaka. We may now look at possible sources which may corroborate Candrakīrti’s contention.

Considering that the Sūtra quoted at the end of Chapter 26 is in fact the Śālistambasūtra, I believe this should be the first candidate. Candrakīrti may be quoting from memory and paraphrasing, hence we can read his quotation as an abbreviated form of the text immediately contiguous to the section of the Śālistambasūtra last quoted in Chapter 26. Moreover, the *actual* quote appears at the end of Chapter 27. For stylistic reasons too, it was quite reasonable on the part of Candrakīrti to abbreviate, considering that the following would have been a very bulky introductory text:

*yaḥ kaścīd bhadanta śāriputra imaṃ **pratītyasamutpādaṃ** bhagavatā samyakpraṇītaṃ **evaṃ yathābhūtaṃ** samyakprajñayā satatasamītaṃ ajīvaṃ nirjīvaṃ yathāvadaviparītaṃ ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akṛtaṃ asaṃ skṛtaṃ apratighaṃ anāvaraṇaṃ śīvaṃ abhayaṃ anāhāryaṃ avyayaṃ avyupaśamasvabhāvaṃ **paśyati**, asatas tucchato riktato’sārataḥ rogato gaṇḍataḥ śalyato’ghato’nityato duḥkhataḥ śūnyato’nātmataś ca samanupaśyati, **sa na pūrvāntaṃ pratisarati** - kiṃ nv ahaṃ abhūvaṃ atīte ‘dhvani āhosvin nābhūvaṃ atīte’ dhvani ko nv ahaṃ abhūvaṃ atīte’ dhvani kathaṃ nv ahaṃ abhūvaṃ atīte ‘dhvani | **aparāntaṃ** vā punar **na pratisarati** - kiṃ nv ahaṃ bhaviṣyāmy anāgate ‘dhvani, āhosvin na bhaviṣyāmy anāgate’ dhvani, ko nu bhaviṣyāmy anāgate ‘dhvani, kathaṃ nu bhaviṣyāmy anāgate’ dhvani |*

Please notice how the initial sentence in Candrakīrti's commentary matches with the highlighted sections of this part of the Sūtra.²⁰

Candrakīrti's commentary therefore links Chapters 26 and 27 to the Śālistambasūtra, wherein dependent arising and views are directly connected to the process of rebirth. I will later argue that Candrakīrti understands the rest of Chapter 27 according to the same principle.

It would be difficult on the other hand to try to establish a similar relation between Nāgārjuna's root text and the Śālistambasūtra – there is no sign of such a link anywhere else in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. Since I have shown strong similarities between the latter and the Nidānasamyukta, it may be sensible to ask whether any part of the Nidānasamyukta shows a progression comparable to the transition from Chapter 26 to Chapter 27. I believe that the following section of Sūtra 14 does:

*yataś ca śrutavatāryaśrāvakeṇa pratītyasamutpādaś ca
pratītyasamutpannāś ca dharmā yathābhūtaṁ samyakprajñayā sudṛṣṭā
bhavanti |*

*sa na pūrvāntaṁ pratisarati | kin nv aham abhūvam atīte 'dhvani
| aho svin nāham atīte 'dhvani | ko nv aham abhūvam atīte 'dhvani
| kathaṁ nv aham abhūvam atīte 'dhvani |*

*aparāntaṁ vā na pratisarati | kin nu bhaviṣyāmy anāgate 'dhvani
| aho svin na bhaviṣyāmy anāgate 'dhvani | ko nu bhaviṣyāmy
anāgate 'dhvani | kathaṁ nu bhaviṣyāmy anāgate 'dhvani |²¹*

When dependent arising and dependently arisen *dharmas* are well seen, according to the way things are, by a learned Noble Śrāvaka, through perfect wisdom, then

he does not run after the prior limit: did I exist in the past? Or did I not exist in the past? Who was I in the past? How was I in the past?

²⁰ For an English translation of this passage, see Ross Reat, page 70.

²¹ A very similar passage is quoted in Abhidharmakośabhāṣya 3.25: *yataś ca bhikṣavo bhikṣuṇā pratītyasamutpādaś ca pratītyasamutpannāś ca dharmā evaṁ yathābhūtaṁ samyakprajñayā dṛṣṭā bhavanti | sa na pūrvānte pratisarati kiṁ nv aham abhūvam atīte 'dhvanīti vistarāḥ ||* I discuss the previous part of this commentary, and the verse which it is commenting upon, at the end of section 5 of this article.

Nor does he run after the ulterior limit: will I exist in the time to come? Or will I not exist in the time to come? Who will I be in the time to come? How will I be in the time to come?

The parallel between chapters 26 and 27 and Sūtra 14 works very well, since as in those chapters (and as in the Śālistambasūtra), the latter text starts by explaining the twelve limbs of dependent arising and then passes on to say that if one understands dependent arising one overcomes views.

Even the progression to the last two verses of Chapter 27 (verses 29 and 30) finds a parallel in the structure of Sūtra 24. After analysing the specific views that he represented in a *catuṣkoṭi* format, Nāgārjuna speaks of getting rid of all views:

athavā sarvabhāvānāṃ śūnyatvāc chāśvatādayaḥ |
kva kasya katamāḥ kasmāt sambhaviṣyanti drṣṭayaḥ || 27.29 ||

Or, because of the emptiness of all things, where, for whom, which,
and due to what reason, would views like ‘permanent’ and so forth come about?

sarvadrṣṭiprahāṇāya yaḥ saddharmam adeśayat |
anukampām upādāya taṃ namasyāmi gautamam || 27.30 ||

He taught the Saddharma for the sake of relinquishing all views,
out of compassion: I bow to that Gautama.

The Sūtra’s concluding section, similarly, follows from the refutation of those views related to the *pūrvānta* and *aparānta*, and extends its concern to the removal of all views:

yāni tāny ekatyānāṃ śramaṇabrāhmaṇānāṃ pṛthalloke drṣṭigatāni
tadyathā ātmavādapratisaṃ yuktāni sattvavādapratisaṃ yuktāni
jīvavādapratisaṃ yuktāni kotūhalamaṅgalavādapratisaṃ yuktāni tāny
asya tasmīn samaye prahīṇāni bhavanti pariñātāny ucchinnamūlāni
tālamastakavad anābhavagatikāny āyatyām anutpādadharmāni ||
14.12 ||

tatkasmāddhetoḥ | tathā hi śrutavatāryaśrāvakeṇ pratītyasamutpādaś
ca pratītyasamutpannāś ca dharmā yathābhūtaṃ samyakprajñayā
sudrṣṭāḥ sujuṣṭāḥ suviditāḥ supratividdhāḥ || 14.13 ||

Whichever views in this ordinary world may exist for Śramaṇas or Brāhmaṇas - linked to a view of self, linked to a view of a sentient being, linked to a view of a soul, linked to a view of auspicious rites – those, at that time, are in him destroyed, perfectly cognized, cut at the root, like the top of a palm tree, they will not come into existence, they have the quality of not arising in the future.

What is the reason for that? It is because, dependent arising and dependently arisen *dharma*s are well seen, well practiced, well known, well penetrated, according to the way things are, by a learned Noble Śrāvaka, through perfect wisdom.

This part of Sūtra 14 is in turn close (almost verbatim) to the portion of the Śālistambasūtra quoted at the end of Candrakīrti's commentary, following the quote reproduced above and presenting an identical progression:

yāni ekeṣāṃ śramaṇabrāhmaṇānāṃ prthagloke drṣṭigatāni bhaviṣyanti, tadyathā-ātmavādapratīsaṃyuktāni sattvavādapratīsaṃyuktāni jīva-vādapratīsaṃyuktāni pudgalavādapratīsaṃyuktāni kautukamaṅgalavādapratīsaṃyuktāni unmiṇjītāni nemiṇjītāni ca, tāny asya tasmin samaye prahīṇāni bhavanti pariṇātāni samucchinnamūlāni tālamastakavad anābhāsagatāni āyatyām anutpādānirodhadharmāṇi ||²²

The structure of chapters 26 and 27 of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā might have been influenced by its sources of reference. It seems that Candrakīrti hinted at the same idea, judging from his use of the Śālistambasūtra. Considering his intended audience, Candrakīrti may have had good reasons to employ the Śālistambasūtra rather than the Nidānasamyukta. On the other hand, Nāgārjuna's *kārikās* seem to be addressed to readers, for whom the Nidānasamyukta would have most likely been more authoritative. Nonetheless, since the material from the Śālistamba is very similar to that of the Nidānasamyukta (and to much non-Mahāyāna material more broadly), Candrakīrti's comments and perceptive use of quotations turn out to be very helpful.

Here it is important to emphasize how the sections of the Śālistambasūtra quoted by Candrakīrti are very close to non-Mahāyāna materials, not only from the Nidānasamyukta, but also from the Pāli (Samyuttanikāya and Majjhimanikāya). It is even uncertain whether

²² For an English rendering, see Ross Reat, page 72.

Candrakīrti himself would have considered the Śālistambasūtra as a specifically Mahāyāna text: in any case, this is to say that the commentator is in fact much more aware of the non- (specifically) Mahāyāna background of these chapters, than Kalupahana would make him to be.

I have hinted at the fact that these comparisons may help assessing the intended context of some of Nāgārjuna's arguments. A closer analysis of chapter 27 is now necessary to that end.

5. Basic structure of Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, Chapter 27

We may gain a better understanding of the sense and the central concerns of the concluding chapter of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā by outlining its basic structure. My differences from previous scholarly interpreters of the *Dṛṣṭiparīkṣā* partly stem from a different view about its structure: I will thus try to group the verses according to my understanding, offering an interpretive scheme that I think makes the text coherent and in line with Candrakīrti's comments.

Verses 1 and 2 delineate sixteen basic wrong views (*dṛṣṭi*) regarding the continuity of the person from one birth to the next. Eight of these views, mentioned in the first verse, depend on a prior limit (which Candrakīrti identifies with previous lives):

- did I exist in the past? *kiṃ nv aham abhūvam atītam adhvānam*
- did I not exist in the past? *nābhūvam atītam adhvānam*
- did I both exist and not exist? *abhūvaṃ ca nābhūvaṃ ca*
- did I neither exist nor not exist? *naivābhūvaṃ na nābhūvaṃ*

The other four extend the same question of temporal continuity to the whole world (*loka*). As Candrakīrti puts it, the first four refer to oneself (*ātmanaḥ*), while the second set of four present a generalised question (*sāmānyena*). Notice, though, that in both cases the limit referred to is, unambiguously, a temporal limit.

The next eight views are the counterpart of the first eight, when referred to the future, the next or final limit (hence, future lives). Again, we are obviously dealing with a temporal limit.

Verses 3-13 analyse the first four views, which are based on the prior limit. Verses 14-20 analyse the four views which refer to oneself and are based on the final limit - whether I will exist, or not, etc., in the future. Candrakīrti makes this clear, when he introduces this section by saying that:

*tadevaṃ pūrvāntaṃ samāśritasya dṛṣṭicatuṣṭayasya asaṃbhavam
udbhāvyā, idānīm aparāntaṃ samāśritasya pratiṣedham āha [...]*

Thus, having in this way demonstrated the impossibility of the four views based on the prior limit, he denies the (four views) based on the final limit.

Verses 21-28 examine the other four views resting on a final limit, namely the four views about the *temporal* limit of this world. Again, Candrakīrti's introductory remark is quite clear:

*idānīm antavattvam antānantādicatuṣṭayam aparānte yathā na
saṃbhavati, tathā pradīpādayann āha [...]*

Now, showing how the four views of a limit or its lack are impossible in reference to the final limit, he says [...]

As will be seen, this is where my reading (and, I would argue, Candrakīrti's) differs from Garfield's.²³ The text gives no indication of shifting away from the analysis of temporal continuity. Rather, a different emphasis is introduced: while thinking of past or future lives, one might either ask oneself questions regarding one's own personal continuity (did/will I exist?) or generalise the doubt by including one's environment, one's world (will the world/my world exist?).

The link between the two (*ātman, loka*) is highlighted by the fact that Nāgārjuna examines even the views regarding the limits of the 'world' by referring them back to the aggregates; Candrakīrti elaborates on the same lines, by linking the aggregates to different realms of existence.

Thus, I would read the entire chapter as analysing views specifically regarding rebirth: the nature of one's continuity, as well as the continuity of one's world, between past, present and future lives. In brief, I suggest that the intended emphasis on *temporality* and *rebirth* has been (occasionally) missed by Garfield's exegesis.

Verse 29 is a general statement about emptiness, while verse 30 concludes both the chapter, as well as the whole work, with a verse of homage to the Buddha, who taught the *saddharma* for the sake of relinquishing all views. Candrakīrti concludes his commentary by quoting the long passage of the *Śālistambasūtra* which, I have argued, he had summarized in the introductory commentary to 26.1 (the quotation also corroborates my contention).

²³ I am referring especially to Garfield's own commentary to this section of the MMK.

The following table clarifies the structure of the chapter as I have just explained it.

Verse 1	Views resting on the prior limit: 1a. I existed in the past 2a. I did not 3a. I both did and did not 4a. I neither existed nor did not exist 5a. The world has a prior limit 6a. It does not 7a. It both does and does not 8a. It neither exists nor does it not exist
Verse 2	Views resting on the final limit: 1b. I will exist in the future 2b. I will not 3b. I will both exist and not exist 4b. I will neither exist nor not exist 5b. The world has a future limit 6b. It does not 7b. It both does and does not 8b. It neither exists nor does it not exist
Verses 3-13	Discussion of views 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a
Verses 14-20	Discussion of views 1b, 2b, 3b, 4b
Verses 21-28	Discussion of views 5b, 6b, 7b, 8b
Verses 29-30	Conclusion

Please also notice that the link between understanding dependent arising and removing delusions about the past, future and present lives is highlighted by Vasubandhu in the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, commenting on *kārikā* 3.24:

pūrvāparāntamadhyeṣu sammohavinivṛttaye ||

For the sake of removing delusion about the prior and final limit, and about the middle.

Vasubandhu's commentary quotes the very same questions found in the Nidānasamyukta, the Śālistambasūtra and the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, about one's existence in past and future lives. This section of the Bhāṣya bears many similarities to Nāgārjuna's Pratītyasamutpādaḥṛdayavyākhyāna, wherein the delusion to be counteracted is, once again, an imputation of either identity or difference between one life and the next.²⁴ Although a few centuries divide Nāgārjuna from Vasubandhu, it is not unlikely that they may have drawn from a similar and possibly related exegetical tradition about the twelve *aṅgas* of dependent arising.

Consider furthermore that Vasubandhu introduces his verse by asking 'for what purpose in the Sūtra there is [dependent arising] only as pertaining to sentient beings?' (*kim arthaṃ punaḥ sūtre sattvākhyā eva*). This amounts to noticing the privileged thematic link between dependent arising and the analysis of sentient processes - i.e. rebirth.

6. Gods, humans and the meaning of *paraloka*

Not all the verses of this chapter are problematic. Even according to the interpretation of previous scholars, *most* of them have to be explained in terms of rebirth. A few verses, though, have been interpreted without reference to rebirth, and this is where I intend to support a different, and I believe more coherent, exegesis.

Verses 26.15 and 26.17 run as follows:

sa devaḥ sa manuṣyaś ced evaṃ bhavati śāśvatam |
anutpannaś ca devaḥ syāj jāyate na hi śāśvatam || 15 ||

devād anyo manuṣyaś ced aśāśvatam ato bhavet |
devād anyo manuṣyaś ced santatir nopapadyate || 16 ||

divyo yady ekadeśaḥ syād ekadeśaś ca mānuṣaḥ |
aśāśvataḥ śāśvataś ca bhavet tac ca na yujyate || 17 ||

Garfield translates the verses (from the Tibetan) as follows:

15. If a human were a god,
On such a view there would be permanence.

²⁴ *tatra pūrvāntasammoho yata iyaṃ vicikitsā ko nv aham abhūvam atīte' dhvani āhosvin nābhūvaṃ kathaṃ nv abhūvam iti | aparājitasammoho yata iyaṃ vicikitsā kiṃ nu bhaviṣyāmy anāgate' dhvaniṭi vistarāḥ | madhyasammoho yata iyaṃ vicikitsā kiṃvid idaṃ ke santaḥ ke bhaviṣyāmaiṭi.*

The god would be unborn.
For any permanent thing is unborn.

16. If a human were different from a god,
On such a view there would be impermanence.
If the human were different from the god,
A continuum would not be tenable.

17. If one part were divine and
One part were human,
It would be both permanent and impermanent.
That would be irrational.²⁵

Garfield's translation is not far from literal sense of the Sanskrit (apart from some additions), yet I feel it misses the emphasis due to some choices of sentence structure. In verse 26.15, the repetition of the pronoun *saḥ* is likely to have an emphatic function, which could be rendered in English by using a qualification, like 'the same': *if the same god is that very man*, etc.

This way of translating would fit the diachronic sense of the statement, which is about the impossibility of identifying the succeeding modes of birth (human and godly) as being the same person. On the other hand, Garfield's wording turns the *kārikā* into a general statement about the relationship of the human and the divine; a translation with a determinate article ('the god' instead of 'a god') would better mark the fact that we are not talking of an abstract concept of divinity. Moreover, his analysis misses the diachronic element of the argument, partly due to some confusion in interpreting the word *deva*.

In his commentary to this verses, Garfield writes of the 'divinity' that 'engenders its eternality', it seems that the god he is referring to is not quite the impermanent, albeit favourable, mode of existence intended by Buddhist authors in general and here, I think, by Nāgārjuna as well. It may rather be the eternal God, whose infinite life is to be contrasted with man's mortality (as Garfield points out, much like in the Judeo-Christian tradition). In this reading, the difficulty is between reconciling the contradicting attributes which would pertain to man (impermanence) and god (permanence).

On the other hand, the most plausible sense of these verses is that permanence or impermanence refers to the identity or difference between one mode of existence and the next. The choice of the human and god realm is incidental - the same reasoning could apply to the

²⁵ Jay L. Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

problem of dying as a human and being reborn as an animal. In other words, the dialectic is not between permanence and impermanence as mutually exclusive attributes of man and divinity, but between identity and difference within a continuum of different births. Permanence and discontinuity are the unwanted consequences stemming from attributions of identity and difference respectively.

Garfield's reading does not link verse 15 with the preceding one, wherein the problem of future birth is explicitly mentioned.²⁶ I propose, instead, to read the verse without disrupting the continuity of the argument.²⁷ Moreover, one may want to consider Candrakīrti's commentary to the same verse, which reads the *kārikā* as referring to rebirth:

*iha hi kaścin manuṣyagatisthaḥ kuśalaṃ karma kṛtvā devagatiṃ
gacchati | tatra yadi sa eva devaḥ sa eva manuṣya iti evam
ubhayaḥ aikyaṃ syāt tadā śāśvataṃ syāt | na caitad evaṃ yad
deva eva manuṣyo bhaved iti | ato nāsti kiṃcic chāśvataṃ | api
ca śāśvatavāde sati asamutpannaś ca devaḥ syāt | kiṃ kāraṇam?
yasmā jāyate na hi śāśvataṃ | yadd hi vastu śāśvataṃ tad
vidyamānatvān naiva jāyate | tataś ca anutpanno devaḥ syāt
anutpanno devo na yujyate iti | evaṃ tāvac chāśvataṃ na yujyate ||*

Someone placed in the human realm, after performing wholesome deeds in this world, reaches the god realm. In this context, if that very god is the same one who was a man, there would be identity of the two - in which case, there would be permanence. And it is not the case that the very god could be the man. Therefore, there is nothing permanent. Moreover, within a view of permanence, the god could not be born; for what reason? Since that, which is permanent, is not born. That entity, which is permanent, since it is already there, is not born. Therefore, the god would not be born, and an unborn god makes no sense. Thus, permanence makes no sense.

Candrakīrti's commentary to verses 16 and 17 is along the same lines, but I believe the sample just quoted should be sufficient to support the interpretation that I have proposed. The difference from Garfield's reading may be summarised in two points: *deva* here refers to the god

²⁶ *adhvany anāgate kiṃ nu bhaviṣyāmīti darśanam | na bhaviṣyāmi cety etad atītenādhvanā samam || Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, 28.14.*

²⁷ In all fairness and to his credit, I should note that Jay Garfield readily admitted the inaccuracy of his rendering of *deva* through personal communication, and I must thank him for such courtesy.

realm, in the Buddhist sense of an impermanent state of existence; and the dialectics of permanence and impermanence refer to the problem of identity and difference between two successive births. This avoids reading the three verses as a digression from the central topic of the chapter, which is no other than rebirth.

Another term closely connected to rebirth is the Sanskrit *paraloka*. Verse 21 reads:

antavān yadi lokaḥ syāt paralokaḥ katham bhavet |
athāpy anantavān lokaḥ paralokaḥ katham bhavet ||

The sense of the word *paraloka* may be (mis)taken to refer to another world, in the sense of something beyond the spatial limits of the present universe, the latter being possibly referred to as *loka*. In this case, the question addressed by this verse would be one of spatial infinitude, as Garfield's translation (and commentary) suggests:

If the world were limited,
 How could there be another world?
 If the world were unlimited,
 How could there be another world?

In his commentary, Garfield clarifies that Nāgārjuna is pointing out the difficulties in speaking of a world beyond the world, thus possibly bringing the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā in line with Kant's antinomies. He also clearly distinguishes the issue at hand in this verse from the discussion introduced in verse 22, which he (correctly) interprets as 'focusing on the temporal limits of the world'. Kalupahana too moves away from a diachronic interpretation, the one I favour.

There are two major difficulties with Garfield's rendering. The first is that the two Sanskrit terms *loka*, *paraloka*, like *ātra*, *amutra*, etc., commonly refer to this life, the next life (even in modern Indian languages); Kalupahana interprets them correctly. The sense of *loka*, moreover, oscillates between 'world' and 'person', and the link between the two is probably that this/the next world is, in the end, *my* world, depending on the situation of my (re)birth. A more technical explanation is that all compounded *dharma*s are subsumed within the five *skandha*s, which refer more specifically to a person when the qualification *upādānaskandha* is added.

I read verses 21 and 22 as a continuous argument, and this explains why the continuum of the aggregates is employed in verse 22 to refer to *loka*: the *skandha-santāna* is the proper basis for imputing a person (*loka*) within a world. If we don't understand the world *loka* in this way, verse 22 becomes internally inconsistent. This reading, therefore,

has the advantage of not disrupting a continuous line of argumentation. Verse 21, in my understanding, refers to the temporal limits of this life (*loka*) versus the next (*paraloka*).

Once again, Candrakīrti's commentary supports my interpretation:

*yadi hy antavān vināśād ūrdhvaṃ pūrvaloko na syāt, tadā
paraloko na syāt |*

If in fact the previous life had a limit prior to its destruction, then the next life could not occur.²⁸

This passage comments directly on verse 21. The expression 'prior to its destruction' (*vināśād ūrdhvaṃ*) leaves little doubt that we are dealing with temporal limits. Candrakīrti takes verse 22 as the explanation of the assertions contained in verse 21 regarding the impossibility of ascertaining the temporal limits between two lives. This is again clarified by his introductory commentary upon verse 22:

*idānīm antavattvaṃ anantavattvaṃ ca ubhayaṃ etal lokasya yathā
na sambhavati, tathā pratipādayann āha [...]*

Now, showing how neither having limits nor not having them is possible for a person, he says [...]

Moreover, Candrakīrti's commentary to verse 23 clarifies that *loka* must refer to one state of existence, thus an occurrence to be delimited in time: this or that life. When commenting upon the double occurrence of the word 'aggregates' (*skandhāḥ*, *skandhān*) in the verse, the Prasannapadā speaks of a temporal succession from the aggregates of a human existence (*manuṣya-skandhāḥ*) to the aggregates corresponding to a birth in the god realm (*deva-gati-upapatti-saṃgrhītāḥ*). The non-destruction of the first aggregates is the reason for the impossibility of this succession, which would thus make the person's world (*loka*) limited. What the reasoning implies is that the temporal continuity between one life and the next is what makes it impossible to speak of *loka* as having limits.

²⁸ De la Vallée Poussin (page 587, note 3), notices that '*pūrva* manqué dans le tibétain. – *vināśād ūrdhvaṃ* = *zhig nas phyis*.' I thank Peter Skilling for bringing this to my attention. It does imply that the Tibetan version of Candrakīrti's commentary (that Garfield may have most probably consulted) is slightly less explicit about the sense of *loka* and *paraloka* in this passage. The presence of *pūrva* in the Sanskrit version rules out any reading of the passage as referring to the world and the 'world beyond the world'.

The same considerations apply to all the text up to verse 28. Garfield correctly interprets them according to their diachronic sense; nevertheless, the intended meaning of the world *loka* (that it actually refers to this life, its present environment) is not considered in his commentary. This in turn obscures the centrality of the question of rebirth for the whole chapter, breaking up the flow of the argument (against Candrakīrti's reading) and, perhaps more significantly, disrupting its basic structure, which I delineated at the beginning of this section.

Usages outside the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā confirm the interpretation of *loka/paraloka* as this/next life. A very clear instance is Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣyam (xxv-xxix):²⁹

*nāsty ayaṃ loko nāsti paraloko nāsti mātā nāsti pitā nāsti sattva
upapāduka iti kriyāpavādaḥ, lokāntaragamanāgamanakriyāyā
bījādihānakriyāyāḥ pratisaṃdhibandhakriyāyāś cāpavādāt |*

‘This world does not exist, the next world does not exist, a mother does not exist, a father does not exist, there is no being not born from a womb’, such is denial in respect to action, because of the denial of the action of going to and coming from another world, of the action of placing semen, and of the action of tying to the conjunction (*pratisaṃdhi*).³⁰

It seems difficult to interpret the passage in any other sense other than referring to rebirth, and here *loka* and *paraloka* are explicitly linked to the action (*kriyā*) of going and coming, which is a diachronic process. Here the Bhāṣyam simply states that, if we deny this and the next world, we incur over-denial, since we negate that we will go to another world after this life (*lokāntara-gamanakriyā*) and that we have come to this life from another world (*lokāntara-āgamanakriyā*). The rest of the passage also refers to birth (placing the semen) and the intermediate state. Thus, both sense and context link *paraloka* to a process between lives.

At this juncture, the Śālistambasūtra as well as the Nidānasamyukta offer some further clues. Just as in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, views are treated contiguously to the twelve limbs of dependent arising: the

²⁹ Page 6 in Tatia's Edition.

³⁰ *Pratisaṃdhi* is the juncture between one life and the next. The *pratisaṃdhi-vijñāna* is the consciousness corresponding to the third of the twelve links in the cycle of dependent origination (*saṃskāra-pratyayaṃ vijñānam*), which in the Yogācāra tradition is distinguished from the consciousness of the fourth link (*vijñāna-pratyayaṃ nāmarūpam*), taken to be the *ālayavijñāna* instead.

latter relate specifically to rebirth. Not only is this comprehensible within the context of the Sūtras – there is sufficient textual evidence to show that Nāgārjuna himself understood them this way.

The first piece of evidence that I may adduce is from Chapter 26 of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. Nāgārjuna writes that consciousness enters a realm of existence (*vijñānaṃ sanniviśate saṃskārapratyayaṃ gatau*, verse 2). Candrakīrti is even more specific:

tad evaṃ bimbapratibimbādīnāyena mātuh kuṣṭhau vijñāne saṃmūrcchite vijñānapratyayaṃ nāmarūpaṃ niṣicyate, kṣarati prādurbhavatītyarthah | yadi iha gatau vijñānaṃ na saṃmūrchitaṃ syāt, tadā nāmarūpaprādurbhāvo na syāt; ‘sa ced ānanda vijñānaṃ mātuh kuṣṭhiṃ nāvakrameta, na tat kalalaṃ kalalatvāya saṃvarteta’ iti vacanāt ||

Thus, in analogy to such things as an image and its reflection, when consciousness conglomerates in the mother’s womb, name and form, conditioned by consciousness, is infused, meaning that it pours forth or manifests. If in this realm of existence consciousness does not conglomerate, then there would be no manifestation of name and form: ‘If, Ānanda, consciousness were not to enter the mother’s womb, then the foetus would not become a foetus’ – thus from the utterance (of the Buddha).

Apart from the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, Nāgārjuna explicates the link between dependent arising and rebirth in the Prañīyasamutpādaḥṛdayavyākhyāna. Usages like *pratisandhi*, *upapattyaṃśīkacitta* and so forth make it unreasonable to read the text otherwise. The short text contains in particular the following passage:

yady evaṃ, tarhi asmāl lokāt kaḥ paralokaṃ saṃkrāmati | āha | asmāl lokāt paralokaṃ sūkṣmo’nur api na saṃkrāmati |

If so, then, who is it that transmigrates from this world to the next world? He says: from this world to the next world, not even a subtle atom transmigrates.

It is clear that here *loka* and *paraloka* have to do with successive realms of rebirth. In brief, the term *para* in the expression *paraloka* is always found to mean ‘next’ in the sense of temporal succession, rather than ‘other’ in the sense of ‘beyond’ the limits of this world. Indeed, such an idea of a *world beyond* this world is, as far as I know, alien to ancient South Asian cosmology and philosophy. If it is beyond, it not a world: think of the expressions *lokātīta* and *lokottara*, which contrast *laukika*.

We can see a very similar topical progression in the Nidānasamyukta (Sūtra 14), the Śālistambasūtra and the last two chapters of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā:

dependent arising is explained in terms of its twelve limbs, and
hence, rebirth;
various views about past and future lives are rejected;
the understanding of the way things are is equated with the
removal of those views.

If we restrict the views as referring to the identity or difference between the previous life and the next, even the Praṭītyasamutpādaḥṛdayavyākhyāna can be said to have the same structure. Furthermore, one could compare this with Vasubandhu's commentary to Abhidharmakośa 3.25, where he very explicitly connects the teaching of dependent arising in twelve parts to the removal of wrong view in respect to past lives, the present life, or future lives, and quotes a Sūtra to corroborate his claim.

In other words, the connection between comprehending dependent arising and doing away with wrong views about rebirth seems to be a recurrent feature of medieval Buddhist thought, and Nāgārjuna's exposition in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā is consistent with that tradition (as Candrakīrti's commentary also confirms).

7. Conclusions

Lamotte had perceptively noticed a link between the Nidānasamyukta (rather, the Samyuktāgama as a whole) and the Madhyamaka philosophy of emptiness. I have tried to show that the connection may be significant, by highlighting some textual and conceptual similarities that suggest Nāgārjuna's familiarity with some of the Sūtras from the Nidānasamyukta (or with some alternative texts that may have resembled them).

This in turn has facilitated understanding the structure and intended emphasis of the last two chapters of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, in line with Candrakīrti's commentary but using a different source as a point of reference. This emphasis has been identified with *linking dependent arising and the elimination of views to an analysis of rebirth and its process*. I have also shown where my proposed interpretation differs from those of Kalupahana and Garfield. The 'Abhidharmic' emphasis on rebirth in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, both in relation to the analysis of dependent arising (chapter 26) and wrong views (27) is not at all odd

or inconsistent with Mahāyāna thought, and is very well understood and highlighted by Candrakīrti's commentary.

I cannot here dwell too extensively on the possible philosophical reasons for such an emphasis on rebirth in Madhyamaka. It may have to do with upholding that *jñeya* and *jñāna*, objects and cognition, are an interdependent pair – hence, if dependent arising works for non-sentient things (*bāhya*) it must also work for sentient events (*ādhyātmika*). The fundamental idea that *prajñaptis* (notions/names) weave the fabric of the whole world, and therefore, are bound within causal regularities, must also be taken into account – since *prajñaptis* are after all conscious events. It would be contradictory for a Madhyamaka to reduce consciousness to an accident of *rūpa*, when *rūpa* itself depends on the intersection of different notions, which is again a process within consciousness. The idea that matter could pre-exist and be ontologically more fundamental than notions is rather inconsistent with Buddhist thought as a whole – not only the Madhyamaka.³¹ Lastly, mental events are the locus of suffering, bondage and liberation, which, no doubt, is the larger horizon for most Madhyamaka reflection.

An important specification: I do not think that my arguments about the Nidānasamyukta in any way support the idea of Nāgārjuna being a non-Mahāyāna philosopher. It is indeed sensible for Nāgārjuna to draw from texts that his own opponents would have considered authoritative, and in that respect the Nidānasamyukta seems a much better candidate than the Prajñāpāramitāsūtras. This is sufficient to account for the lack of direct appeal to Mahāyāna sources in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. In other words, I agree with Kalupahana's remark that one should read Nāgārjuna more closely against the background of non-Mahāyāna sources; however, I differ in regards to the rationale behind, and the conclusions to be drawn from, such reading.³² Kalupahana is perceptive

³¹ It should be clear by now that my position is antithetical to Garfield's contention that rebirth is of little importance to the Mahāyāna, and that it constitutes the unwanted heritage of a 'pseudo-ātman'. See Jay L. Garfield, *Empty words: Buddhist philosophy and cross-cultural interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, especially page 84. I would say that textual evidence shows rebirth to be a central concern for the Mahāyāna (think of Yogācāra!) and in the case of Madhyamaka, that has to do with its emphasis on dependent arising and/as dependent imputation.

³² Stefania Travagnin (personal communication) pointed out that Yin Shun, a great Chinese scholar of Madhyamaka from the twentieth century, saw a similar link between Nāgārjuna and the non-Mahāyāna sources. This link, though, was not exclusive, since he believed that the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā solved the purpose of reconciling the emptiness of the Prajñāpāramitā with the teachings of the Āgama (i.e. non-Mahāyāna Sūtras). I think this is very much in line with the interpretation I have proposed, offering a plausible alternative to Kalupahana's approach.

in pointing out that Mahāyāna literature (like the Kāśyapaparivarta) retains interest in the twelve limbs of dependent arising while expounding emptiness: even the Suvarṇaprabhāsaśūtra treats of the twelve limbs in its chapter on Śūnyatā. This feature is not unique to early, as opposed to late, Mahāyāna, as I think Kalupahana implies, since even a late commentator like Prajñākaramati quotes extensively from the Śālistambasūtra in his exposition of Madhyamaka.

To show that a few short texts from a large non-Mahāyāna corpus do speak of emptiness is far from implying that therefore the Mahāyāna Sūtras are redundant in that respect; in particular, the larger context of Mahāyāna literature certainly helps to understand Nāgārjuna's thought: take for example Nāgārjuna's extension of the *catuṣkoṭi* to what is *bāhya* – which resembles the Śālistambasūtra and has no parallel in the Nidānasamyukta. The treatment of emptiness in the Nidānasamyukta is cryptic and limited when compared to the Mahāyāna Sūtras. For those who accept its attribution to Nāgārjuna, one may quote verse 27 of the Lokātīstava:

animittam anāgamyā mokṣo nāsti tvam uktavān |
atas tvayā mādhyāne tat sākalyena darśitam ||

‘Without reaching the signless, there is no liberation’, thus have you explained.

Therefore, in the Mahāyāna, you have shown that in its entirety.

Here the most important word is *sākalyena*.

Appendix

Nidānasamuykta, Sūtra 19: A Discussion with Kātyāyana

bhagavān nādikāyāri viharati guṇjakāvasathe | athāyūṣmān
 sandhākātyāyano yena bhagavāṁ stenopajagāma | upetya bhagavatpāda
 śirasā vanditvaikānte 'sthāt | ekāntasthita āyūsmān sandhākātyāyano
 bhagavantam idam avocat | samyagdr̥ṣṭiḥ samyagdr̥ṣṭir iti bhadanta
 ucyate | kiyatā samyagdr̥ṣṭir bhavati | kiyatā tathāgataḥ samyagdr̥ṣṭim
 prajñāpayamānaḥ prajñāpayati | evam ukto bhagavān āyūsmantaṁ
 sandhākātyāyanam idam avocat | dvayaṁ nīśrito 'yaṁ kātyāyana loka
 yad bhūyasāstitāṅ ca nīśrito nāstitāṅ ca | upadhyupādānavinibaddho
 'yaṁ kātyāyana loka yad utāstitāṅ ca nīśrito nāstitāṅ ca | etāni ced
 upadhyupādānāni cetaso 'dhiṣṭhānābhiniveśānuśayān nopaiti nopādatte
 nādhitiṣṭhati nābhiniviśaty ātmā meti | duḥkham idam utpadyamānam
 utpadyate | duḥkham nirudhyamānam nirudhyate | atra cen na kāṅkṣati
 na vicikitsati | aparapratyayaṁ jñānam evāśya bhavati | iyatā kātyāyana
 samyagdr̥ṣṭir bhavati | iyatā tathāgataḥ samyagdr̥ṣṭim prajñāpayamānaḥ
 prajñāpayati | tat kasmād dhetoḥ | lokasamudayaṁ kātyāyana yathābhūtaṁ
 samyakprajñayā paśyato yā loka nāstitā sā na bhavati | lokanīrodhan
 yathābhūtaṁ samyakprajñayā paśyato yā loka 'stitā sā na bhavati | ity
 etāv ubhāv antāv anupagamya madhyamayā pratipadā tathāgato dharmān
 deśayati | yad utāsmiṁ satīdaṁ bhavaty asyotpādād idam utpadyate | yad
 utāvidyāpratyaṃ sām skārā iti pūrvavad yāvat samudayo nīrodhas ca
 bhavati | asmiṁ khalu dharmaparyāye bhāṣyamāṇa āyūsmataḥ sandhā-
 kātyāyanasyānupādāyāsravebhyas cittaṁ vimuktam |

[English translation:]

The Blessed One was dwelling at Nādikā in the brick residence. Then, the Long Lived Sandhākātyāyana approached the place where the Blessed One was. Having come near, he saluted the two feet of the Blessed One with his head, then, he remained on one side. Placed on one side, the Long Lived Sandhākātyāyana said the following to the Blessed One: ‘Bhadanta, it is said *right view, right view*. How is this right view? How does the Tathāgata conceive, while conceiving of right view?’

Having been addressed thus, the Blessed One said the following to the Long Lived Sandhākātyāyana: ‘this world, Kātyāyana, clings mostly to two things: it clings to existence and non-existence. This world, Kātyāyana, is bound by bonds: it clings to existence and non-existence. If one does not approach these appropriations of bonds, being the mind’s resolution, attachment and propensity, if he does not

appropriate them, nor becomes resolved or attached in terms of ‘self’ or ‘mine’, this suffering arises while arising; this suffering ceases while ceasing.

If about this he does not speculate or doubt, surely he has knowledge independent of others. Right view, Kātyāyana, is in this way. In this way the Tathāgata conceives while conceiving of right view.

And why is that? Someone, Kātyāyana, who sees through perfect knowledge the arising of the world as it is, does not conceive of non-existence in respect to the world. Someone, Kātyāyana, who sees through perfect knowledge the cessation of the world as it is, does not conceive of existence in respect to the world.

Not approaching either of those two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dharma through the Middle Path: this being there, this occurs, due to the arising of this, this arises; formations have ignorance as their condition, and thus, as said earlier, up to ‘there is arising and cessation’.

Just as this method of Dharma was being spoken of, the mind of Sandhākātyāyana was released from all the outflows of appropriation.

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